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Reading opens a world full of endless possibilities. Grade 3 teacher Syprose Otieno takes pupils at Makongeni Primary School in Homa Bay County through various learning activities using books provided through USAID's Tusome Early Grade Reading Activity. Each Grade 1-3 pupil in Kenya's public primary schools receives one English and one Kiswahili book to help them read better. Photo: Natasha Sweeney

KENYA

TUSOME EARLY GRADE READING

Learning to read fluently in primary school is a critical foundational skill and one of the greatest predictors of academic success. Tusome (“Let’s Read” in Kiswahili) is a flagship partnership between USAID and the Government of Kenya (GOK) through the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Since 2015, the GOK has invested approximately \$62.5 million in teachers, curriculum support officers, and teaching and learning materials that complement the Tusome program, serving as the GOK’s co-investment with USAID in all 22,952 public primary schools and over 1,500 low-cost private primary schools across Kenya.

For every \$1 USAID invests in Tusome, it leverages \$0.70 in GOK contributions to the early primary grades. As a result of Tusome’s research-driven instructional approach and learning materials alongside its tablet-based online feedback and monitoring system, the program has reached 7.8 million grade 1-3 pupils and is one of the most effective programs to improve learning outcomes at scale funded by any development partner globally.

Implementation of Tusome has ensured gradual strengthening of the MOE’s capacity to improve student learning outcomes nationwide and advance accountability and sustainability.

OUR WORK

Tusome supports literacy development throughout Kenya and fosters a reading culture among early-grade pupils, including children with visual and hearing impairments. Tusome has trained over 77,000 primary school teachers in grades 1-3 and provided over 26 million textbooks to every student across the country, including learners in difficult to reach communities. Tusome trains teachers, administrators, instructional coaches, and curriculum support officers on practical classroom-based experiences. The training develops teachers' pedagogical skills in critical areas of reading instruction; empower principals to provide instructional leadership for their schools; and enable education officials to upload real-time learner performance data to a cloud-based network that fosters greater accountability throughout the education system.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Since 2015, Tusome has:

- Achieved improvements on all reading subtasks in English and Kiswahili, with grade 2 English reading gains from baseline to endline equivalent to one additional year of schooling.
- Developed a national online data collection and monitoring dashboard, enabling the MOE to monitor student learning across the country in real time.
- Collaborated with the MOE to design and produce 389 distance learning lessons for students during the pandemic nine-month school closure period.
- Negotiated with the MOE to co-invest in Tusome by financing the procurement and distribution of textbooks and teacher guides.
- Adapted and distributed specialized teaching and learning materials for visually impaired and hearing-impaired pupils.
- Supported over 1,200 curriculum support officers in all 47 counties to provide instructional coaching to teachers.
- Empowered 23 local youth groups to support extracurricular reading practice for children in their communities.
- Engaged private sector education technology partners including mShule and eKitabu to develop digital learning content for learners in grades 1-3, including those with special needs.

BUDGET: USD \$88.8 million

DURATION: 2014-2022

ACTIVITY LOCATIONS

All public primary schools nationwide plus over 1,500 low-cost private schools in Kenya

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

RTI International

KEY PARTNERS

- Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development
- Kenya Institute of Special Education
- Kenya National Examinations Council
- Ministry of Education
- Teachers Service Commission

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